

IN THE SPECIFICATION

Please replace the following paragraphs:

Beginning at page 6, line 32, and ending at page 7, line 1:

C1) Make-busy mechanism 36 preferably sets a busy flag per unused channel within interface 38, thereby to preclude unused channel allocation by switch 28 during the maintenance setup sequence. The busy flags set by make-busy mechanism 36 will be understood intentionally to misrepresent to switch 28 that the corresponding unused channels are in use. The flag may be defined by one or more bits within a field defined within an interface 38 protocol existing between make-busy mechanism 36 and switch 28 to which it is operatively coupled. By using existing interface protocol 38 between given access server 12a and switch 28, the invention is entirely compatible with existing switches and no special protocol or interface modifications are needed. The busy flags, when set or cleared by make-busy mechanism 36, may be thought of as mock busy signals that force switch 28 to act in accordance with a preexisting protocol to avoid allocation of such channels to otherwise normal service requests. This mechanism buys time for given access server 12a to perform any required off-line service, e.g. hardware or software maintenance, reconfiguration or upgrade.

[Beginning at page 9, line 3, and ending at page 9 line 12:]

C2) When it is determined that maintenance is needed, a busy signal representing the make-busy condition of each unused channel of given access server 12a is communicated at 102 to router or switch 28. At 104, it is determined whether channels that may have been in use when maintenance was invoked are now no longer in use. As described above, interface 38 is updated continuously to signal switch 28 the progressively 'busy' conditions of the channels. In other words, blocks 104, 102 represent awaiting termination of use of any remaining associated channels of the given access server and communicates a busy condition thereof to the service request router. When all channels of given access server 12a are idle, and have been made-busy by communicating their busy condition to router or switch 28, maintenance is performed at 106.